

**STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION
QUARTERLY REPORT
March 22, 2022
Michael D. Cox, Conservation Director**

McFarland Park

- Lake renovation plans are being developed. The lake has not been dredged since construction in the 70's. Sedimentation is a phosphorus source and is limiting aquatic life. Renovation will include a sediment catchment forebay. Public opinion has been sought and is being compiled

Heart of Iowa Nature Trail

- Wayfinding signs have been designed and we are awaiting installation. Central Iowa Trail Mapping was installed at Slater Trailhead. These signs will be a much-needed addition to the trail. Use of the trail at Slater has quadrupled since 2019 (prior to paving)
- We have been awarded grants for paving the trail between Cambridge and 610th Ave. This project is in design.

West Peterson/ Skunk River Stabilization Project

- A river bank stabilization project has been completed.
- We have contracted for improvements to the parking and beach area. This work should be completed this spring

Dakins Lake Primitive Campground

- Construction is underway. Larger angled sites with water/ electric are being installed. Defined primitive camping is being installed.

Sopers Mill Water Trail Access Improvements

- We have been awarded a grant from the Iowa DNR to improve the water trail access at Sopers Mill. The project will include parking area improvements and addition of a second launch point.

Water Quality

- Agreements are being signed by landowners for installation of edge of field practices this summer. The grant application to Iowa Water Infrastructure Fund has been declined. We will move forward with 2022 installations utilizing appropriated ARPA funds.
- Water Quality monitoring volunteers have been trained and are ready to begin monitoring.
- Actively participating in 2 of the 3 watershed management authorities (Fourmile and Headwaters).
- We are working with the City of Ames and IDALS to design a proposed wetland at Dotson. The wetland would treat water in Boone-Story #8 by pumping it from the open ditch to the wetland. When preliminary design is complete, a proposal will be made to the Drainage District Trustees. The design plan is currently being reviewed by the parties.

Events/Environmental Education

- School programs are in full force.
- Summer camp registrations start April 14th. Thirty-two camp opportunities are being offered. These camps will be daytime only.
- We are co-sponsoring the Iowa Master Naturalist certification course with the Iowa Master Naturalist organization. This is a 12-week course starting March 19th. The course is full. This is the first time this course is being successfully offered in central Iowa.
- We are co-sponsoring the Master Conservationist course with ISU Extension. This seven-week course starts April 21st. The course is full.

Natural Resources

- We received a grant to conduct a floristic inventory at remnant prairies on pioneer cemeteries.
- We will be working with the IDNR and other county conservation departments to establish a small seed nursery for native prairie plants.

Personnel

- All but one field operations positions have been filled.
- Conditional offers have been extended to the Outreach/Community Engagement Coordinator, and a Conservation Technician.

Legislative

- Land protection by the DNR and county conservation boards has been under siege at the capitol. A bill exists now that would prevent a landowner from selling land to a county or the DNR at market value. This directly attacks landowner rights and the ability of counties and the DNR to permanently protect land.
- SSB 3157 is a bill which will fund the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. The previous attempt to enact the trust fund in the Senate's Tax reform bill was unsuccessful.